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SOME OBSERVATIONS
ON
HEALTH RESORTS,

BY

Compliments of E. O. OTIS, M.D.,
OF BOSTON.



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SOME OBSERVATIONS ON HEALTH RESORTS.¹

BY E. O. OTIS, M.D., OF BOSTON.

It is not with the expectation of presenting anything new upon the subject of health resorts that I write these few notes. But rather with the hope that possibly I may render some aid, by means of the following suggestions and record of personal observations, limited though they may be, to the family physician who is called upon, as he unfortunately so often is, in this climate, to recommend a proper resort to his patients suffering from pulmonary trouble, for they compose the majority of those who seek a new clime.

The whole subject of climatic cure is a many-sided one, and there are many and diverse opinions as to what constitutes a suitable resort for those with delicate or diseased lungs. I have only to refer to the excellent paper of Dr. Harold Williams, in a recent number of the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, to show the variety and conflict of opinions which exist upon this subject. The general fact, however, remains that thousands have had their lives prolonged or saved by a timely resort to some one of the many places in this country, more favored by nature as to climate than this bleak New England coast.

I am not a partisan of any special portion of the country or place, as a universal elysium for all those afflicted with lung trouble. On the contrary, I believe that each individual case should be carefully considered in all its aspects, and be sent to that place and climate which seems best to meet its own especial needs and requirements.

¹ Read before the Section for Clinical Medicine, Pathology, and Hygiene, of the Suffolk District Medical Society, January 13, 1886.

One person has little vitality and is always pinched with the cold ; such a one obviously will do better in a moderately warm climate, like southern California or Florida. Another case will endure a certain degree of cold, and will thrive in a locality of lower temperature, like Colorado or Asheville. Again, the digestion may be at fault, and it is of primary importance that a place should be selected where a good table can be depended upon even if something has to be sacrificed as to the climate. Moreover, the mental condition and temperament must not be disregarded, and the kind of life the patient has been leading. One person requires much diversion, and would be wretched in a quiet, secluded place, but contented and happy in a more lively one, like St. Augustine, for instance.

Companionship is also an important element, and with pleasant, genial companions, one will often make greater gain in a less favored locality, than with the lack of them in one more nearly approaching the ideal climate. The opportunities which different resorts offer for varieties of exercise are not to be lost sight of, as well as the favorite form of exercise of the patient. Happy and fortunate is the consumptive, as well as any other man, who has a hobby which will give him exercise in the open air, be it fishing, gunning, rowing, or horse-back riding. I believe that the cause of many of the unfavorable results in cases which have been sent to health resorts of acknowledged worth, is the neglect of carefully considering all these factors.

Of course, it goes without saying, that due attention should be given to the hygienic condition of the locality determined upon, and also, that the fundamental principles of all health resorts are to be borne in mind, namely: pure air, dry soil, and abundant sunshine. Elevation, dryness, and equability, are often I believe, of secondary importance, and are to be taken into ac-

count rather when the requirements of the individual case are being considered.

There should be at hand, also, in every health resort, a reliable physician, with whom, if necessary, the home physician can communicate concerning his patient, and who being familiar with all the conditions of the place and climate, can give such advice as one should have upon taking up his residence at the resort.

I am of the conviction, as I believe all are who have given much attention to the matter of climate, that the best results are obtained by as long a continuous residence as possible in the place and climate which has been found to suit the case. It takes a long time to become acclimated, if the change is at all radical, as from a cold to a warm climate, or from a low to a high elevation, and after that comes the benefit and improvement, and so long as that continues, the better it is to remain in the chosen resort.

Still there are many whose conditions and circumstances are such that the stay away must be limited, and the number of places from which to choose restricted. In order, then, that the most good may be accomplished from the time allowed, all the greater care must be given in the selection of the resort from among the ones possible to the case in question. Indeed, so many points have to be thought of in choosing a new home for the man of weak lungs, that I have almost come to the conclusion that no physician has any right to advise a patient to go to this place or that, unless he has first visited it himself and thoroughly investigated its advantages and defects. Recently, a young lawyer came to me and related his experience in being sent to a health resort. After it was determined, from the condition of his lungs, that he must go away, the advice as to a new climate was something in this wise: "Some say this place is good; others that; I know nothing of any of them. You may find the

Tennessee Mountains of benefit, but I know nothing about them; have never been there; you can go and try them." So he went, and after numerous vicissitudes, he fell to living a complete out-door life, much of the time on horseback, and came home apparently well, and has remained so for several years. Such hap-hazard advice, however, will not always have such fortunate results.

"Happy the patient, says Yomans,¹ in a recent article on "Thomasville as a Winter Resort," "advised to change his climate when the physician knows enough to give him intelligent instruction as to whither he shall proceed. Does he need a mild or a high temperature? a damp and relaxing, or a dry and bracing air? an inland location or the seaside? a valley or a mountain? Should he try Bermuda or Aiken, or Nassau or St. Augustine, or Asheville, or any of the score of resorts recommended for pulmonary invalids? If the doctor settles the point, it is well; if not, the patient must take his chances, and do the best he can to settle it for himself." Going on to relate his own experience, he says:—"With lungs badly out of order, everybody said I must escape the severities of a New York winter by going somewhere. I advised with several eminent pulmonary experts, who agreed that it might be a good thing to get away, but did not seem to think it made much difference where I went."

If specialists continue to multiply, perhaps in the future we shall have the specialist on climate. One who has visited the different health resorts and made careful observations, not only as to any particular climate, but of all the accessories of the place—food, sanitary condition, means of exercise and amusement, manner of reaching it, and so on; and who, moreover, will give an unbiased opinion, instead of the half-truthful, exaggerated reports which local partisans give

¹ Popular Science Monthly, December 1885, page 182.

of the places they are personally interested in. In a pamphlet before me, just received from Thomasville, Ga., I quote the following as illustrative of this exaggeration: "The fact is well recognized that a damp atmosphere is what a sufferer from pulmonary trouble should avoid, and it follows, that to obtain the greatest amount of good effects from the presence of the fragrant pines, the breezes that waft the balsamic odors abroad must be dry, and themselves inodorous. In order that these conditions be fulfilled, it is essential that large quantities of water be absent, and the surface of the country be high and rolling. A fulfilment of these conditions is impossible in Florida, surrounded as the State is, on three sides by the ocean, with its land surface but a few feet above the level, a dreary waste of interminable swamp, intersected by sluggish streams and marshy lakes. Perched on her elevated position, Thomasville can lay claim to the advantages of a dry climate and thorough drainage, and her claims have secured the recognition of the most eminent physicians of the country who have made pulmonary troubles a study."

Again, in an article entitled "Marion County, Florida: An Ideal Winter Climate," by Dr. Maxwell, of Ocala, published in the *Medical News* of December 19, 1885, the author among a number of very loose statements, makes this assertion: "It is capable of demonstration . . . that Florida possesses the essentials (of an ideal winter climate), in a higher degree than any country now known;" and as a part of this demonstration, he introduces a table of mean relative humidity, compiled by Dr. Kenworthy, from the inevitable Signal Service Reports, which shows, he says, "that Jacksonville, in the matter of dryness of air, compares favorably with the popular resorts in all parts of the world;" the table given, containing the names of thirteen places only, three being in Minnesota, three in

Florida, two in France, and one each in Nassau, New Jersey, Georgia, Dakota, and Massachusetts. If the Doctor had included Denver, for instance, in his list, he would have found its relative humidity some seventeen points lower than that of Jacksonville.

I will now give some notes and bits of information upon a few health resorts I have visited in the South and elsewhere, and I trust I shall be pardoned if I seem to give some petty details, even to the noting of boarding-houses; for such information is often of much assistance in settling the perplexing question of a new home and climate.

The Southern resorts can roughly be divided into those of the coast, interior, and mountains, and with the exception of the latter regions, are generally regarded as winter homes for invalids; but the rule of continuous residence, before mentioned, will hold good, I believe, even of many of these Southern localities. The mountainous regions, embracing the Alleghany, Blue Ridge, and Cumberland Ranges, are considered more appropriate for the milder portions of the year, but here, again, I would advocate the above rule for, at least, portions as far south as Asheville, unless the idiosyncrasy and condition of the patient were such as to forbid a moderately cold climate.

Of the coast resorts, places on the East or West side of the Peninsula of Florida are, perhaps, more generally selected, and whether the Atlantic or Gulf of Mexico shore is the more favorable, seems to be a matter of opinion. As the prevailing winds are East, it is said that the Atlantic coast gets the purer air direct from the ocean, while it reaches the Gulf coast after blowing over the peninsula, and is, in consequence, more or less vitiated. Of course, the climate of all sea-coast resorts is a more or less moist one, which, in adapting a climate to the individual case, is a factor to be considered.

One fact I desire to emphasize, and I might as well mention it here, namely, that, in my experience, it is exceedingly difficult to obtain good food in the South. The meat and bread are poor, as a rule, and the coffee with few exceptions, execrable, and from the fact that there is very little grazing, the milk is poor, if, indeed, it can be obtained at all. The houses where good board is obtained are generally kept by Northern people.

On the Atlantic coast, St. Augustine is the best-known resort, and it has much to recommend it. The soil is sandy, and the days, so far as my experience goes, are generally sunny and delightful. The mean temperature is 58° in the winter, and 68° in the spring. The number of clear days for the whole year is said to be 235, which I should very much doubt. Artesian wells have recently been sunk, and the city is now supplied with good water in place of the surface water formerly used. It is an attractive place on account of its picturesque, quaint architecture, the old fort, seawall, and barracks, and the presence of a military band adds much to the pleasure and entertainment of the exile. There is also good sailing and pleasant water excursions.

If I may be allowed to give a couple of names, I will say that any one who can obtain accommodations at Miss Hasseltine's on St. George Street, and have for his medical adviser Dr. Adams, will be well cared for. As to malaria, I have not much doubt as to its existence pretty much all over the South, but I saw very little evidence of it in St. Augustine.

If one desires to go still further south on the Atlantic coast, the little town of Daytona on the Halifax river, was highly extolled to me for its agreeable climate, by a resident of the place.

Going over to the Gulf side, I will speak of Tampa, reached by railroad direct from Sanford. In itself, it

is not very attractive, the streets being very sandy, which renders locomotion uncomfortable. The bay, however, is delightful, and the excursions upon it, and up the Manatee River, and to Egmont Key are charming. So far as one's sensations go, the air seems delicious.

Bordentown, on the Manatee river seemed to be a quiet, pleasant retreat. I believe it is on the Gulf coast, a little way from Tampa that a location for a sanitarium has been recently selected. On the line of the railroad going from Sanford to Tampa are many attractive places in the pines, Orlando, Winterpark, Longwood, Altamont, and Kissimmee, the latter prettily situated on a lake of the same name. Many find health and comfort on the St. John's River, but it seems to me that malaria must be more prevalent there than in places away from the river.

Anywhere in Florida one is pretty sure to find conditions under which he can lead an out-door life, which answers one of the primary requisites for a health resort. Still the low, and in many portions, swampy character of the soil is a serious objection to its choice as a health resort in many cases.

About twenty miles inland from Charleston, S. C., is a resort much in favor with the Charlestonians, called Summerville. It is far enough away from the coast to escape the frequent east winds, and has a mild, equable temperature. It is in the midst of the pines, and has a pure air and sandy soil. From my experience, however, one must have a good digestion if he would gain any benefit from a sojourn here. There is frequent daily communication with Charleston, and the diversion of a run to the city is an added attraction to the place.

Fortress Munroe or Old Point Comfort does not seem to me to be altogether favorable for a continuous residence, but rather for a limited stay in the spring or

autumn. The soil is clayey, the weather uncertain, and fogs are frequent. This opinion is fortified by that of one of the military surgeons whom I met there. The exceedingly attractive and unique life which one finds there, however, and the many excursions by land and water mitigate very decidedly the unfavorable climatic conditions, and succeed in drawing the patient out of doors and out of himself. The peculiar Indian summer days, which are frequent there, are particularly soothing and restful. For those who cannot afford hotel prices, and who desire greater quiet and seclusion than can be obtained at a large hotel, I will give the name of a good boarding house, the only one in fact on the reservation. It is that of Mrs. Eaton, near the water and opposite the Fort. On the Hampton River, opposite the beautiful grounds of General Armstrong's Normal Institute and the Soldier's Home, is the boarding house of Daniel Cock, of good report, where there are good opportunities for rowing. It is, however, too far away to allow one to enjoy the diversion which the Fort life offers.

To jump from the South to the North, I wish to say a few words in conclusion, upon the Adirondacks, where there are patients not only in summer, but also now quite a colony in winter. Dry it is not, judging from my experience the last summer, and the diurnal variations of temperature are quite great. But despite all this, so far as my observation has extended, consumptives do remarkably well there, provided there are no very acute symptoms. The air is bracing and pure, and the out-door attractions numberless. Everything conduces to keep one in the open air, and persuades to much exercise. The grazing is good, and consequently the milk is abundant and rich. The boarding houses are often poor, but good ones can be found, as all who have made trial of the Mirror Lake House at Lake Placid can testify. I do not know that it

makes much difference where one goes in the Adirondacks in the summer: perhaps the portions of about two thousand feet elevation are the best. If one is strong enough, and the digestion is good, camping out probably gives one more pure air than can be obtained in any other way.

Saranac seems to be the winter home for consumptives in the Adirondacks, and has the sanction of Drs. Loomis and Trudeau. It is better protected from the winds than other places, and commands a good physician. Near by the village of Saranac is the sanitarium recently established — a most admirable charity. It consists of a large main building and several cottages and tents, and, at a small price, one can obtain every needed comfort. The only objection, if it is one, is the bringing together, in such close proximity, a number of consumptives. This did not seem, at least, to have a depressing effect, judging from the cheerful appearance of those I saw there. The sanitarium is kept open all winter, and I have at hand a letter from a lady who has been an inmate of the institution all summer, who wrote me that she had gained so much she proposed to spend the winter there. It was quite noticeable how many began to gain in weight after coming to the wilderness.

I do not want it understood that I ignore the numerous other health resorts I have not mentioned, or consider those I have the best; I have only spoken of the few I have happened to be personally acquainted with. I doubt not that there are many others far more ideal than any I have mentioned. All know of the remarkable results of the Colorado and New Mexico climatic cure, and of the influence of the climate in certain portions of California, and of the high pine lands of the South, as represented by Aiken; indeed, I think we have in this country a wealth of health resorts from which to choose. I desire, however, to emphasize the

fact that there are many other considerations to be carefully weighed in selecting a resort for a consumptive beside the one of the best ideal climate; in fact, that is the best ideal climate for the individual patient which best meets his individual needs, mental and physical, and that in any place where the air is pure, the sunshine constant, and the temperature so adapted to his condition that he can live out of doors, he will improve if improvement is possible.

I will very hastily run over a single case which I think well illustrates the points I have been attempting to make clear in this paper.

In March of last year, I discovered, to my great surprise and alarm, that a member of my family had evidences of consolidation at both apices, accompanied with a moderate rise of temperature. Distrusting my own judgment when thus personally interested, I sought the opinion of Dr. Knight, who very kindly gave it, but corroborated my worst fears. In addition to the pulmonary trouble, the vitality was low, and there was much dyspepsia of many months' standing. The outlook indeed seemed dark, the prognosis grave. Many weeks of trying weather still remained, and I determined that an immediate change of climate was imperative, and that the harsh spring winds must be avoided. The first requisite was such a climate as would enable one to exist with the least exertion, and lead an out-door life. Moreover these conditions must be obtained with as little outlay of strength as possible on the part of the patient. I therefore went with my patient to St. Augustine, reached from Washington in about a day and a night. There I found delightful weather and sunny days, where a delicate person could live out of doors from morning to night, with perfect comfort. Damp no doubt it was and low, far from an ideal climate for a consumptive one might say, but it exactly fulfilled the conditions required for the patient

in question, and before the month of April was over, she could walk about the old town, and take a lively interest in what was going on, whereas on her advent, she could hardly get across the street, and was indifferent to all surrounding scenes. The lungs remained much in the same condition, to be sure, but the strength was returning, and the drooping spirits had revived.

At the beginning of May, we gradually retraced our steps North, following the strawberries. At Charleston it was the season of roses, and out door life was delightful. Every day brought an excursion with it. There were also pleasant companions, and so we had again an ideal climate for the especial requirements of this especial case. Loitering along we finally reached Fortress Monroe in its pleasantest season, and here several weeks were spent with benefit to body and mind. Now it seemed to me that the general condition had so much improved that a more bracing climate might with safety and benefit be tried, so our next move was to Lake Placid in the Adirondacks, two thousand feet above the level of the sea. My hopes were realized. From one hundred and three pounds, the weight went up to one hundred and twenty; the dyspepsia almost entirely disappeared, and the consolidation began to clear up. So much had been gained at the end of October that it seemed to me still more might be ventured, and after an interim of two or three weeks, my patient went to Colorado, where she now is, and I have the most encouraging reports of her well-being and steady improvement.



